

THE TREES IN GOD'S COURTS

NO. 1365

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show
that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”
Psalm 92:13-15.*

THESE verses occur at the close of a psalm for the Sabbath over which there rests a Sabbatic glory of perfect calm, of hallowed peace. Amidst the business and bustle of daily life, the great trouble of the psalmist was the prosperity of the wicked, but it does not trouble him at all when he enters the sanctuary, there to keep the holy day. He then looks upon the ungodly who prosper in the world as so much flowering grass in their beauty and he beholds them cut down and utterly destroyed. And it is meet that a psalm for the Sabbath should be calm and peaceful, cloudless and far-seeing. If on any day we see things in their right light and our views extend farther than at other times, surely it should be on the day of sacred rest. I know a friend who wished to take a house in Newcastle. It stood on an elevated position and the landlord, who wished to have him for a tenant, took him to the attic of the house and said, “What a view there is from this window. Do you know,” said he, “that on Sundays you can see Durham Cathedral?” “On Sundays,” said my friend, with a look of surprise, “And why not on other days?” “Well,” said the landlord, “on Sundays there is less smoke and so you can see farther.” And as it is in the natural world, so it should always be in the spiritual—less of the smoke of this world—less of the dust and the care of life and therefore a clearer vision of the things which are beyond, which God reveals to spiritual eyes. Read and sing this psalm often and may your heart constantly be in that sweet restful state.

David, having here put aside this trouble which he so often brings up in the psalms—the frequent prosperity of the wicked as they exult in power and spread themselves like a green bay tree, while the righteous are plagued all the day long and chastened every morning—after putting that aside, he dwells upon the delightful condition of the man of God and he describes him as a tree that is planted in the courts of God’s house, growing, flourishing, and bearing fruit even in old age. It is of such we are now going to speak and we shall call your attention to *the planting of the trees, the promise that they shall flourish, the continued fertility they exhibit, and the conclusive proof they show of God’s faithfulness.* “Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.”

I. THE PLANTING. It sounds oddly to you to hear of planting a tree in a house and of its flourishing in courts, but you will please to remember that an oriental house is a sort of quadrangle. It is a four-square building with the middle open to the sky and generally there is a small garden in which a palm tree, or an olive, or some other evergreen tree (for they generally prefer that sort) will be found planted. So what seems strange to us—a tree planted in a house—was not at all strange to David or to anybody else who lived in the city of Jerusalem. And it is a very beautiful figure—this being planted within the four courts of God’s house that we might grow right in the middle of the place where God, with His family, deigns to dwell.

What, then, is it to be planted? Well, we are planted in God’s house in two respects. First, *in regeneration*, when we are born into the house and secondly, *at our profession of faith*, which should be by baptism, when we are publicly brought into the house and planted in the likeness of Christ’s death by being buried, after His commandment, in the water.

We are really planted in the courts of the Lord’s house *by the new birth*. Then we become the children of God, for “as many as received Him (that is to say, Him who is the divine Word, the true light, the Savior), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Every man, the world over, who has been born of the Holy Spirit, is really planted in the Lord’s house. But we become manifestly and visibly so on confessing to the world this inward and spiritual grace, for the Lord

has thus put it, you know, "He that with His heart believes, and with His mouth makes confession, shall be saved," so that when I come to join God's people and ask to be admitted to their fellowship—when I come to the Lord's Table with them and publicly own myself to be one of the Master's servants—then I, am in a public manner, planted in the house of the Lord.

Well, this being the fact, let us follow the figure a little more closely.

Planting implies, first, that *there has been something done for us that that we could not do for ourselves*. A tree cannot plant itself. There are self-sown trees, but such are not spoken of in the text. It is "those that are planted in the house of the Lord." And you know it is necessary that there should be a work of grace upon our souls, which shall come, not from ourselves, but distinctly from God, for "every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up." It cannot plant itself and if it could, it must be rooted up, because it would not be planted by the heavenly Father. There must be worked up-on us, in order to our being truly in the courts of the Lord's house, a work of grace infinitely beyond the power of the will or all the power that dwells in human nature. We must, in fact, be new-created. We must be born again. We must have as great a work worked upon us as was worked upon the body of Christ when He was raised from the dead. The eternal power and Godhead of the divine Spirit must put forth the fullness of its strength to raise you up from your death in sin or otherwise you will be like dried branches and cast off pieces of wood, but never will you be trees planted, made to live, and to grow in the courts of the Lord's house. There must be something done for us if we are planted.

That implies, too, that there must be *a great change in our position*, for a tree that is planted has been growing somewhere else. It has to reach a certain height in the nurseryman's garden, if we are speaking of England, and then it is planted where it is meant to be permanently fixed. So must it have been in the East. The tree grew somewhere else. After a time, it was dug up, its roots were loosened, and it was taken away from the place where it had been accustomed to stand. Many a tender rootlet was made to bleed and it was then carried and put in another place altogether and so from being outside the court, it came to be inside the court of the house of the Lord. So, brothers and sisters, if we are to answer the condition described in the text, we must have been dug up and transplanted. This is to have undergone a great and wonderful change. Are we conscious of it? Do we know ourselves to be new creatures in Christ Jesus? If you are what you always were, you are what I pray you may not always be. But if you are new, changed, transformed, or to come back to the text, transplanted, then I trust you may continue to thrive according to the promise, "They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

Ah me, that transplanting business is often very painful and while it is being undergone, we almost think that we are going to be destroyed. What anxiety it causes, for how is the plant to know why it is being taken up by the roots for? Perhaps it fancies—or rather, if it had any intellect it would fancy, that it was taken up to be destroyed—just as when the law put a big spade down to our roots and began to loosen all our soil about us, we thought, "Now we are going to be cut down." But we were not—we were going to be transplanted from the field of nature into the garden of grace. Blessed be God, we know what this means.

Planting means not only that something has been done for us that we could not do for ourselves and that a great change has taken place in our position, but it implies that *there is life in us*. I suppose that if we speak of planting a post or planting a pillar, we hardly use correct language. We plant a thing that has life in it and we do not consider that a thing has been planted unless it is a living thing. Most certainly the promise of the text could not be fulfilled to any but a living tree, for it is said, "They that are planted shall flourish and they shall bring forth fruit." God does not intend to have dead stumps standing in His court.—

*"That little garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,
That little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wild wilderness,"*

is not intended to be occupied by dead trees. If there is such in it, He will come and say, "Cut it down! Why does it cumber the ground?" It is a living tree that He desires to have there. Beloved, are you conscious of an inner life? Does there beat within you another pulse besides that which betokens natural life, the pulse of strong desire and love to God? Is there within you the heaving of another breath than

that which keeps body and soul together? Is there the breath of prayer that keeps the soul and God together and so keeps the man in spiritual life? Are you quickened? Have you had breathed into your nostrils the breath of the life of God? Is there within you the incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever? God's people are a living people and if we do not know the life of God we do not know God at all. There must be a life in us.

And then, to complete the figure, it seems to me that the fact of our being planted implies that *we ourselves have taken hold of the soil where we have been placed*. A tree that is rightly planted, so as to flourish, begins to send out its roots, to drink in moisture, to select from the earth around it those portions which are fit food for vegetable life.

Now, beloved, are you so incorporated with the church of God that you have got a grip of the fellowship of the saints, that you have effectually laid hold of the citizenship of our Lord's faithful disciples? Are you seeking for vital truth to sustain your soul's vitality? Do you in the ordinances send out the rootlets of your desire to seek after what God has prepared for you? Is there in you a living sap flowing, which sap is being fed by what you draw in from the soil in which God has placed you? Surely you know what this means. Sabbath days are often feeding times to you and your visits to the Lord in prayer are building-up times to your spirit. And when you search the Word in private, and when the Holy Spirit communes with you in your quiet retirement, ay, and when, even in the midst of business, your soul breathes her swift utterances up to heaven, then are the roots of your soul taking hold of Christ and drawing out of Him the vital element which you need. You are of the right kind if this is the case, and you shall flourish in the courts of our God. You see then the figure, and what is meant by this planting in the house of the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, LET US ENDEAVOR TO GRASP THE PROMISE. "Those that are planted shall flourish." "*Flourish*" they well may. Let us be sure of their welfare.

They shall flourish *because God has said that they shall*. His promises are sure to be fulfilled. If He plants a tree, He will cause it to flourish. There seems to be very much against the Christian, many perils to which he is exposed, when he is first planted. Indeed, in the early childhood of Christian life, we undergo a world of trial. Such was our weakness and such our exposure to the bleak atmosphere of this present evil world—the chances were all against us. But there is no chance with God. What He plants is sure to take root. If He says it shall flourish, flourish it will. Satan may seek to tear it up. The foxes may try to spoil the vines. There may be chilling winds. There may be long droughts. The sun may seek to smite it by day and the moon by night, but God has promised that it shall flourish and flourish it must. Therefore, I invite you, young Christians, to be very hopeful. See to it that you are rightly planted and then you may depend upon it that you will really flourish. God, who has been pleased to give you divine grace, will bestow on you more grace and then more grace—grace upon grace—grace for every crisis and every emergency. As your needs arise, those needs shall be supplied. Just as you require spiritual health, spiritual health shall be vouchsafed to you if you seek it at His hands, knowing that it is at His disposal. You shall not be a half-starved Christian—a sort of living skeleton of a believer, but you shall flourish. You shall be peaceful, happy, strong, and useful. Set your heart upon this and ask the Lord to make you thrive and bloom and bear fruit. Your leaf shall not wither and He will cause you to prosper if you are planted in the courts of the Lord.

Some of you, perhaps, are Christian men who have received the Word with gladness and believed to the saving of your souls and so far you appear to be in the courts of God's house, but you have never joined the church or made a profession of your faith, which, though it may be very sincere, is not very apparent. As, however, you have not gone in for the whole of the planting, you cannot reasonably expect to realize the whole of the flourishing. I like to know that I have given myself wholly up to the Lord according to His commands, not having merely embraced one part of the gospel, but the whole of it. When one has sought to obey it in its entirety, then he may come and expect to have the promise in its entirety, too. If you are altogether Christians, planted in His house, not merely in His garden, but in His house, then you shall flourish, for you have the promise that you shall. And flourish you well may, because of *the goodness of the soil*. They are quite sure to have good soil in the little garden enclosed by the house. It may be rocky outside, but when a man has built the four walls of his house in the East, he generally takes all the soil that is in the middle away. It may be very bad and poor, but then he has brought in baskets of the richest soil that he can possibly get, for he must have a good tree in the middle

of his house. It would not do every moment of the day to look out, or rather to look in, and to see a little scrubby tree, half alive. No, he procures the best soil he can get and those that are planted in the house of the Lord are planted in the best soil possible. They are planted where the means of grace abound. They are planted where Christians help one another with mutual fellowship. They are planted where the ordinances of the gospel are freely enjoyed by all who dwell there. They are planted where the Holy Spirit has promised to abide. They are planted where the Word of God does not return void. They are planted where the eye and the heart of Christ perpetually rest. They are planted in His church—the church that He has redeemed with His most precious blood. The soil is good and they ought to flourish, and they shall.

And then they are planted in a *sheltered position*. You know that trees, even if they have good soil, are sometimes a great deal kept back by having a cold northerly aspect. They may be very much bitten by the frost, but a tree that is planted right in the middle of the forecourt, surrounded by the walls, is sheltered. There is the natural warmth of the house round about it and it is sheltered from that which other trees out in the vineyard, or out in the garden, may have to endure. Oh, how sheltered some of us have been from our first profession of faith. I know that I can speak to some here who began Christian life in a class in the Sunday school where a loving teacher looked after their spiritual interests. There are others of you that began your Christian life in the midst of a warm-hearted, earnest church. You were no sooner seen as a member than two or three friends took hold of you and they did all they could to encourage you, guide you, and sympathize with you. Whenever they may have observed a little lukewarmness or backsliding in your manner, they have looked after you as a mother anxious for her child, so tenderly have you been nursed by those who watched for your souls. And you surely cannot forget how, on Sabbath days, the Word of God has been a wonderful shelter to you. When your feet had almost slipped, there has been the very Word to hold you up. When you felt dispirited, there has been a promise to encourage you. When you have been ready to turn back, there has been an exhortation that has stimulated you once more to go forward, and so you have lived inside four walls. The cold could not get at you. You scarcely had enough of the cold of the world to do you any injury. The warm sun of righteousness was reflected upon you, not only did it come directly upon you by divine favor, but it was reflected upon you with grateful sympathy by the walls of the house of the Lord in which you had been planted. You know it has been so. Is it any wonder then that you flourish? There is a little wonder sometimes that you do not flourish more and that you do not bring forth more fruit, for what more could God do than He has done for some of you who have been planted in the house of the Lord? Are you not like a vineyard on a very fruitful hill which He has hedged about and walled, and in which He has put a winepress and which He has watered every morning, and lest any should hurt it, has kept night and day? How sour the grapes and how few the clusters fit for the Great Vinedresser to gather, no one knows better than yourselves. Yet they ought to flourish, because they are planted in good soil and because they are placed in a sheltered position.

Still we might assign a better reason why you should flourish. It is *because you are so near the Husbandman*. "My Father is the husbandman," says Christ. They that are planted in the house of the Lord are planted in the husbandman's house.

I think I hear someone say, "I do not wonder that such a vine flourishes, because, you see, the Great Vinedresser, who understands all about it, has it on the wall of His own house. He sees it every morning and of course He pays very special attention to it." Little do you and I know, beloved, what special attention God has paid to us personally and individually. Oh, there are some of us upon whom the Lord has long looked with a tender but jealous eye. If He has seen a little wrong about us, He has grieved at it and felt, "I must put it away." When He has seen us getting a little cold, He has begun at once to awaken us, for He has loved us too well to leave us exposed to even a little spiritual sickness. He has said sometimes, "There is My servant and he will get proud of his service or of his success—I must bring him down." High looks and haughty thoughts are an abomination in His sight. Another time He has said, "Such-and-Such is increasing in wealth. He will get worldly-minded. I must take away some of his worldly goods that he may take more account of his treasures laid up in heaven and set his heart more on Me." The Lord your God is a jealous God. Where there is love, there is oftentimes a sensitiveness which stirs up jealousy. The greatness of God's love makes Him very zealous for us and very jealous of us. If He sees those whom He very much loves with the slightest evil thing about them, He is quick to observe

it and prompt to purge it away. You know that you do not like to see a spot on your dear child's face—you will have it washed off as soon as possible. So will the Lord cleanse His people, both without and within. The care and the trouble He has had with us, as I have already said, none of us can tell. We ought to bring forth fruit to the profit of the husbandman, to the glory of God. Branches that bring forth fruit He purges. Those that bring forth very little fruit He lets very much alone. If there is a man that brings forth much fruit, that man will have much trial because it will pay the Vinedresser to prune him. Some branches will not pay for it. They will never do more than they are doing and so there they are and thus they are left to prove their feebleness, but those that will pay for pruning will be pruned again and again. And truly, when the man of God is in his right mind, he will bless the Lord for the honor He puts upon him when He afflicts him with the view of making him still more useful. This is evermore our Lord's design. Does He not say that they shall never perish whom He protects and provides for, holding them in His hands? But, as they cannot flourish if they run to wood, He will be quite sure to use His knife to take off this new shoot and that new shoot, because it is not fruit-bearing wood, and He takes it away and He leaves the vine in such a condition that it will bring forth good fruit in due time. They shall flourish and well they may, when they are so near to the Great Husbandman's hand.

Now, if any of you are not flourishing, though you are planted in the house of the Lord, I am sure it is not through any fault on God's part. Let such ask Him, and ask themselves, the reason why and go to Him in prayer and say, "Good Lord, I am planted in Your house. Make me to flourish according to Your Word."

III. Well now, as to THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS FLOURISHING, our third head is full of consolation. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

There are some that begin with a spurt and it is soon over, and there are some trees that promise exceedingly well for fruit, but the blossoms do not knit, hence, they fail to yield fruit in due season. But those whom God plants and whom He makes to flourish bring forth fruit, and continue to bring it forth till old age. During all their youth and all their manhood, they keep fruitful and then they bring forth fruit when their years decline and their days are numbered. When others are in the withered and yellow leaf, then are their fruits ripe and mellow. When others are decaying, they are ripening. They are growing sweeter, better, holier, when others are not growing at all. They shall bring forth fruit in old age—that time when one does not expect much fruit bearing—when the strength fails, when the capacity for projecting seems to have gone and the power for carrying out what is projected has become very little. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age." This is not merely a cheering promise, but it is a very gratifying fact that God's people do bring forth fruit in old age. Very luscious fruit some of them produce. Yes, we look for the best fruit in the oldest saints. What fruit, then, you will ask, do they bring forth?

Well, there is the fruit of *testimony*. I distinctly recollect hearing a blind old minister talk of the loving-kindness of the Lord when I was sixteen or seventeen, and the encouragement that he gave me has never departed from me. A young man could not have done that because he had not attained so much experience, but the weight of years, and even of infirmities, made that venerable blind man's testimony very, very weighty to my soul. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age." Blessed be His name, I can tell of the goodness of the Lord to me these twenty-five years or more since I have known Him, but think of a man who can speak of fifty years, and there are some children of God who can do so. There is a member of this church who has been a member of it for seventy years and she can tell you how good the Lord has been to her. And the fruit is riper, you know. There is a cumulative force of evidence, because if a thing has been true fifty years and a person has tried it in all sorts and shapes and ways and modes and conditions and circumstances—fifty years—well, who is to contradict that? It must be so and you feel the testimony is a blessed fruit of old age.

Saints bring forth fruit in the way of *savor* when they grow old. Many young ministers can rattle out some of the truths of the Gospel very readily, but if you want to taste the sweetness, to feel the unction, to enjoy the savor, you must hear one that has had long and deep experience. It must be so. There is an inimitable mellowness about the Christian who has grown old in his Master's service. If you want to hear about the sea, talk to an "old salt." If you want to hear about war, talk to an old soldier that has been in battle and smelt gunpowder, and knows what it is to have lost a leg. He is the man to tell you. And so, if you want to know about the real deeps, the truth, the vitality, the power of religion, you must not go to boys, you must go to those who bring forth fruit in old age, because they can speak out of the fullness of

their soul. Have not we had some in this church—there are such now and there are some in heaven—who, every time we used to hear them speak, let drop pearls and diamonds while they talked about what the Lord had done for them. Dear old Mr. Dransfield—how many a time he electrified us when he used to stand on that platform and talk about the blessedness of God and the sweetness of religion to his soul. You used to think a great deal more of it because he was so old. I am sure you did. It was good in itself, but still there was the age of the man at the back of it. So in that case the age gave a power to the experience which he told out to you.

The aged Christian ought to have, and I hope he often has, the fruit of *patience*. After having suffered so long and enjoyed the mercies of God so long, he ought to learn to be patient. I once heard a good Christian man say that he was confessing a fault. He said, “I am afraid that the fruit of my old age is peevishness.” “No,” I said, “that is not a fruit of your old age—it is a fruit of your old nature.” But the fruit of old age, where there is grace in old age, should be patience. And oh, what fruit some of God's servants do show by way of patience in poverty, in sickness, in infirmities. There used to sit here an aged woman who could not hear anything I said, but she always came because she thought it was setting a good example to the young people at home to attend the house of God. Whenever I used to speak with her, there was such a charm about her conversation because, though she was much tried, she never uttered a complaint. She could only bless the name of the Lord for everything. You remember Dr. Hamilton's story of poor old Betty who could not do anything but lie in bed and cough, but she said, “Well, bless the Lord, whatever the Lord has told me to do I have tried to do it. And when He said, ‘Betty, bring up your family,’ I tried to bring them up in the fear of God. When He said, ‘Betty, go to the house of God and sing My praises,’ I was delighted to do it. And when He said, ‘Betty, go upstairs and lie in bed and cough,’ well I do it,” she said, “and bless the name of the Lord for letting me do it so long as there is anything to be done for Him.”

Now, the promise is that if we be thus planted as I have described, we shall be enabled to bring forth fruit in old age. Anything that we do with a sincere desire to glorify God in it and anything that we bear with patience and quietness according to the divine will is sweet and gracious fruit. We can bring forth that fruit in our old age.

One of the most delicious fruits that Christians produce in their old age is *calm, quiet confidence in God*. John Bunyan has described this in his, “Pilgrim's Progress,” in the beautiful picture of the land Beulah. I shall not at all object to have a grey head and eyes like lamps whose wasting oil is spent, weak shoulders and tottering knees, if I may get to Beulah. You know that he describes it as a land that was just on the verge of the river and so near to the celestial country that the shining ones did often cross the river, and there was a pervading smell of sweet spices all over the land because it lay so near to the city of the blessed that when the wind blew that way it wafted the spices across. And they could, in quiet places of the land, often hear the songs of the shining ones who wandered there. The inhabitants were at perfect rest. The land was called Beulah, for God's delight was in her. They that dwelt in her were called Hephzibah, for they were married unto the Lord and they were sitting there, many of them, close by the brink of the river, waiting till a message should come from the King, for the King's messengers, every now and then, came into the country and they said, “The pitcher is broken at the cistern. Rise up, my love, and come away.” And so, one by one, the Beulahites crossed that river. On bright sunshiny mornings, they were known to cross it singing, “O grave, where is your victory?” Well, it is that patient abiding that quiet waiting, that holy confidence, that divine anticipation, that sweet expectation of the coming glory that is one of the fruits which believers bring forth in old age. And whenever we see it, we prize those golden apples and long for the time when we may bear them, too.

But now notice that the text does not speak of old age merely bringing forth fruit, but it says, “They shall be fat and flourishing,” which means that Christians, in their advanced years, shall have a fullness of savor and life in them. I have known some Christians, both old and young, that have been very dry sticks, not fat and flourishing certainly. They had very little savor and very little unction, though they had very sharp teeth to bite the young people with. They were very critical, very ready to look harshly at them and ask them hard questions, and if they could not spell the biggest word in the whole confession of faith, they have said, “Ah, the young people nowadays are not like what they used to be in my time.” We have known some of that sort. But when they are planted in the house of God and God makes them to flourish, they are full of the juice of love. They are full of Christian kindness and gentleness. They are

full of life. They are full of real vigor—not the vigor of the flesh, but the vigor of the Spirit—and they love the Lord and delight in Him, and delight to help the young people and to encourage them in the ways of the Lord. Oh, I like to see an old man thus fat and flourishing.

And it is added, in addition to their being fat, that they shall be flourishing. It means that the aged believer shall have a special verdure. This flourishing means his profession and how delightful is the profession of Christianity in advanced age. I do not mean that some people get exceedingly attached to the pastor whom they have heard for many, many years. One old woman used to say that she liked to hear the old minister better than anybody else. “Well, but,” they said, “He is getting very feeble.” “Oh,” she said, “but then I recollect what he used to be and I would sooner see him shake his head than I would hear anybody else preach.” And I have no doubt that, though that grows to be an infirmity and folly, there is something praiseworthy in it, because you recollect the times and seasons when the Lord refreshed your soul by him and there is a moral glory about a man as you look at him who has been, say for fifty years, living and laboring as a public professing Christian, without a stain upon his reputation—not a spot on his character. Why, the young people say, “Bless God! If He has kept him, why should He not keep me, and if the Lord has sustained him under many trials, why should He not sustain me?” It is not what the man says; it is the man that says it that gives force to all he says. It is what you know is behind the voice. It is the experience of the Lord's goodness. It is the long-continued honorable conduct which God has enabled him to evince and to show to others, by the abounding grace that was within him, which preaches in accents louder than the finest voice can articulate.

Now, I do pray that every young man here—and I am glad to see so many young men—will seek to be one day amongst the old men whose profession shall be the very strength of the church, because of this consistency. I will not say to my elder brethren—because the Lord will say it to them—that they ought to remember what manner of people they ought to be, seeing that God has been so gracious to them these many years.

IV. I close with my fourth point, which is THE MANIFESTATION THAT AFFORDS CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. “To show that the Lord is upright.” These good folks are to bring forth fruit and to be fat and flourishing on purpose, to manifest before the eyes of all men, “That the Lord is upright. He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

“That the Lord is upright.” Well, how does the fruit-bearing of an aged Christian show that? Why, it shows that God has kept His promise. He has promised that He will never leave them nor forsake them. There you see it. He has promised that when they are weak, they shall be strong. There you see it. He has promised that if they seek Him, they shall not lack any good thing. There you see it. He has promised them, “Your bread shall be given you. Your water shall be sure.” Hear what they have to say and you will see it. He has said, “Even to hoar hairs I am He. I have made and I will bear, and I will carry you as in the days of old.” There you have it. Ask them. There you see it. We put, “Q. E. D.” at the end of a proposition when it is proved. So you may put that down at the end of the problem of life. God is good to His people. The old man stands up and says, “Truly God is good to Israel. If you could hear my story, young man, you would see it before your eyes and it would show that the Lord is upright.”

Nor is it only that He keeps His promises, but the Lord is kind and generous towards His servants. I always think it a shameful, heartless thing to turn adrift, when He gets old, a man who has been in your service from His youth. It is one of the things that have become more common in present than in former times, to turn out old servants. Since you have had the pith of their life—the marrow out of their bones—do keep a roof over their heads. Grant them a pension or at least a pittance. Supply them with a bit of bread and cheese till they die. I think it is only right that an old servant, a faithful servant, should be so treated. You know how David puts it, “O God, You have taught me from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.” It is not likely that He would, is it? Such a God as He turn His old servants off? You remember the Amalekite who had a master that was an Egyptian and the master left him to perish and David found him? Ah, well, that is how the Egyptian masters do, but that is not how our Master does. You will not leave or desert me when my age and my infirmities multiply upon me. When these eyes grow dim, You will look upon me. When another shall guard me and lead me where I would not, You still will be my friend and helper, and lay Your finger on my eyelids as I close them in the hour of death. It is a faithful

God we serve and He keeps His people alive in their old age that they may show that He is a faithful and upright God.

Now, David added at the end, "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." I want every one of my elderly friends to add his, Amen, to this sentence and to set his seal that God is true. Come forward as witnesses, attest the deed while it is being executed, and put your names to the record and say, "I bear witness to that." At least I want you in the silence of your hearts to come and say, "Yes, I can bear witness." David says, "He is my rock." My aged brethren, you can say, "God is the rock on which my hope is founded—my foundation—and He has never failed me. The rock will never shake, never move, never give way. He is the rock of my defense—the 'rock of ages cleft for me.' I have hidden myself in Him and I have been safe. He is the Rock of my abiding. I have dwelt in Him and lived in Him and I have found Him my castle and my high tower. He is a rock for immutability." Can you say that, brethren? He has never changed—never. He has been "without variableness or shadow of turning." Every good and perfect gift have I received from Him. Bear witness to it. This is what is wanted in this age—that you should bear witness that God is a rock—firm, strong, faithful, immutable—the defense of His people.

And then, "There is no unrighteousness in Him." I would have you bear witness to that. You have had some sharp troubles. Have you ever had more than you ought to have? You have had many losses. Have you really lost anything in being a Christian? You have been brought very low. Have you ever been left and deserted altogether? You have gone through fire and through water, but has the fire consumed you? Has the water drowned you? If you have anything to say against God, you old servants of His, let us hear it. No, but the older God's people get, the more they praise Him, and one reason why I am sure that God must be a good God is that I always find that all His servants want to get their children into the same house, into the same family. A man is not badly treated by his master when he says, "My ambition is to have my boy follow me." Oh, I can speak well of my Lord and Master in all that He has ever given me to do, but it is the joy of my soul to think that my sons should follow me in the love of Christ and the preaching of the gospel. We who are younger men, but yet who have had a good deal of tossing to and fro, can say, "He is my Lord and there is no unrighteousness in Him. No, not a flaw in Him—not one unkindness, not one unfaithfulness, not one forgetfulness, not one angry word, not one thing but what has been full of love." He has said, "I have sworn that I would not be angry with you, or rebuke you," and He has kept His promise and up to this hour we cannot discover speck, spot, or flaw in all the transactions of His providence. Though sometimes they have been mysterious, they have always been right. Blessed be His name forever and ever.

Oh, who would not be planted in the courts of such a God as this to be kept even to old age and to be blessed with such unspeakable blessings world without end? God grant you all to be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He might be glorified. Amen.

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